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Season's Greetings

This has been another good year for the space program and for the Johnson Space Center. As the holiday season approaches, we can all take pride in the Center's significant progress this year, setting the stage for what promises to be an even more productive and challenging year in 1998.

Christmas day will mark the 643rd consecutive day we have had an American crew member in space. This remarkable achievement, as you all know, has not come without difficulties. But between our efforts and those of our Russian partners, we have not only overcome those difficulties but also learned much from them. This knowledge is being put to good use now as Andy Thomas prepares for his mission. The knowledge we have gained will also serve us well as we continue toward launch, assembly and operation of the International Space Station.

Much of what we have accomplished in our partnership with the Russians can be attributed to the excellent performance of the Shuttle. The transition in that program continues, and we are making steady progress toward reducing the government's involvement in day-to-day operations. In the meantime, eight successful launches, five consecutive on-time, are testimony to the hard work and dedication of the Team NASA.

And, we continue to forge ahead with our partners in the International Space Station program. As you know, this partnership expanded recently with the addition of Brazil as a member. With their contributions, and those of all our partners, we will continue to make excellent progress on this critical program. After many years of hard work on the part of the Station team, it is gratifying to see hardware coming off the production line—but it is also sobering to know that we are only 7 months from first element launch. Much remains to be done, but I am confident that we are up to the challenge.

We should be proud also of the critically important efforts going into our advanced technologies efforts here at JSC. If we are to set the stage for an eventual return to the moon and for the human exploration of Mars, these efforts must continue. As we complete Phase III of the chamber tests in building 7, we can take pride in knowing that we are collecting the data and testing the systems that will enable us one day to sustain life on long-duration space missions. And our efforts in other areas, such as Transhab, X-38, and the development of advanced operations concepts are equally impressive. Just as important, we are not only developing the new technologies, but we are also proving that we can apply them to multiple programs as we continue the human exploration of space.

Please see **ABBEY**, Page 8

George W. S. Abbey

